

Hobbies

Dollar seller decries two-bit treatment

By Roger Boye

Here are answers to more questions from Chicago Tribune readers.

Q—I visited a Chicago coin store last week, trying to sell my 1888 silver dollar. The dealer offered me just \$4 and acted as if I were giving him a piece of dirt. Was he trying to gyp me? I'm not happy with the way I was treated.

A. H., Chicago

A—There's no excuse for rude behavior. Dozens of courteous, honest coin dealers live in the Chicago area, and they all want customers. You should take your business elsewhere.

The dollar you described contains .77 of an ounce of silver but lacks major value as a collectible. Still, you probably should get at least \$8 for the coin, assuming it grades "very fine" or better.

Q—What's the best way to protect my wheat penny collection? Also, what makes some of my coins turn green? Do rubber bands hurt them?

J. B., Green Bay, Wis.

A—You should store your keepsakes in tubes or individual

holders that are made of inert plastic. Copper oxidizes and corrodes over time, especially when it comes in contact with moisture, rubber or even the sulfur in paper. Green crud suggests that you are failing to protect your hoard from the elements.

Also, be sure to hold each cent along the edge rather than on the surface and try not to breathe on the coins.

Q—The Kennedy Mint Inc. of Strongsville, Ohio, is selling sets of 50 uncirculated Lincoln cents with each coin displaying the outline and initials of a different state. The asking price is \$14 per set. Do these coins—dated 1988—have investment potential?

R. V., Chicago

A—No. The so-called "state pennies" might make interesting conversation pieces, but you may never be able to recoup your \$14 by selling the set to a dealer or collector. The state outlines are etched into the coins by a private company that has no affiliation with the federal government. Most coin buffs shun such "contrived collectibles."

Q—When cashing a check, I was given a new \$10 bill, series 1985, with a blank back side. There's not even a trace of ink. Is this special?

R. E., Chicago

A—Yes. The bill you described sometimes retails for as much as \$125, according to hobby guidebooks. Most likely, the error occurred when two sheets fed into the printing press at the same time, preventing ink from going onto the back side of the sheet that contained your bill.

Q—Are silver-colored 1943 Lincoln cents valuable to collectors? It's been years since I've found one in my change.

D. F., Morton Grove

A—Dealers sell such coins in "fine condition" for about a quarter each. Uncle Sam made cents out of zinc-coated steel during that war year to conserve copper for weapons.

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Questions about coins or paper money? Send your queries to Roger Boye, Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.